

From Andrew Ezergailis: *The Holocaust in Latvia 1941–1944*  
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## IX

# The Killings in the Cities

(Sections on Daugavpils, Rēzekne, and Ventspils have been omitted)

### Liepāja<sup>1</sup>

According to the headquarters of the 18th Army, civilians in Liepāja have also engaged in fighting against the Germans. Therefore in addition to the EK 1a, a part of EK 2 has been ordered there with the assignment to deal with the situation ruthlessly.

*Ereignismeldung, July 1, 1941*

The Germans distrusted Liepāja more than any other Latvian city. It was a proletarian and a leftist town, and, as a port, an element in a skein of international shipping routes. Since the collapse of Russia in 1917 its activities had been much reduced. Liepāja was the first thorn in the crown of the initial Barbarossa success.<sup>2</sup> The Germans had hoped to take the city on the second day of the war. Late on June 22, they penetrated the Latvian frontiers and came within striking distance of the city. Had the progress of the 291 Infantry Division been one-third as fast on the second day as it was on the first, Liepāja would have been German by the next afternoon. As it happened, to the surprise of the Germans, the Red Army forces and the civilian *gvardists* were no pushovers, but held on for almost a whole week. In retrospect, the tenacity of Liepāja gives weight to Stalin's words delivered on July 3, 1941, that “no army is invincible.” In a small way Liepāja forecast what would happen to the German army at Moscow.

When they finally entered the city, the Germans were in a surly and suspicious mood. Dead bodies, military hardware, and rubble were littered all over the streets.<sup>3</sup> War damage was extensive, fires burned and smoldered for days. Calming the city was not easy. Sniping at the German patrols continued for days, and never completely stopped for the duration of the war.<sup>4</sup> The spirit of resistance in Liepāja also to some degree translated itself into a greater sympathy for Jews than in some other parts of Latvia.<sup>5</sup> Pacifying the city was not the only aim of the Germans. On the

first day of the occupation a vehicle with a loudspeaker drove through the city, announcing: “People of Liepāja! Go to bed and trust the German army to guard your life and property. Whoever is on the street between 7:00 in the evening and 8:00 in the morning will be considered an enemy and shot without a warning.” The cracking of plate glass—a soldier’s rifle butt breaking windows—was a frequent sound in Liepāja’s shopping district.<sup>6</sup> The hunt for the Jews began with the first hours of occupation.

Learning of the resistance, Stahlecker ordered a detail of Einsatzkommando 1a and 2 to Liepāja, “to deal with the situation ruthlessly.”<sup>7</sup> Some of the ruthlessness is evident in the retribution rules. Nowhere else in Latvia did the Germans announce the severity of death threats as early as in Liepāja.<sup>8</sup> On July 1, 1941, two days after the occupation began, the commandant of Liepāja, Korvettenkapitän Stein, issued a call mandating the killing of ten hostages for any act of sabotage or robbery committed.<sup>9</sup> In the same announcement Stein also set up an ambiguous relationship between the civilians and soldiers, saying that in the vicinity of Liepāja many Red Army soldiers had exchanged their uniforms for civilian clothes and thus had foregone the right to be treated as POWs.

On July 8 the threat was escalated by Korvettenkapitän Brückner, Stein’s replacement, and given an anti-Jewish twist: “The Latvian inhabitants are encouraged to report to the Security Police all hiding Bolsheviks and Jewish thieves. Should the events of the last two nights be repeated, 100 hostages will be shot for every wounded German soldier.”<sup>10</sup> As previously noted, on July 5, Brückner issued the first comprehensive anti-Jewish edict, consisting of numerous provisions:

1. All Jews to wear an easily recognizable yellow marking on the back and the chest [a marking] that is not smaller than ten cm. by ten cm.
2. All men from sixteen to sixty must appear at 7:00 A.M. daily for work duty.
3. The shopping time for all Jews is 10:00 A.M. to 12:00 noon.
4. Jews are allowed to leave their quarters only from 10:00 to 12:00 in the morning and 3:00 to 5:00 in the afternoon.
5. The Jews are forbidden to attend public events and walk on the seashore.
6. When meeting an uniformed German the Jew must leave the sidewalk.
7. It is forbidden for the Jews to use any public transportation.
8. All Jewish shops must have the sign “A Jewish business” in its window.

9. All Jews must turn in all radios, all means of transportation, all uniforms and all weapons, and all typewriters.<sup>11</sup>

The evidence in the Grauel trial showed that, though the SD and its EK of EG A were the major organizers and perpetrators of atrocities in Latvia, they were not the only ones. In Liepāja, the Wehrmacht, the navy, and the Ordnungspolizei also contributed to the killings. As in Rīga, it was the military commandants who first issued anti-Jewish regulations and threatened severe punishments for their violation.

In the long run, the fate of the city and of its Jews was the same as elsewhere in Latvia. The killings started at the time of the occupation and continued through December 1941. The majority of Liepāja's Jews—2,731—were killed in a three-day massacre on December 15 to 17. Unlike in Rīga, the ghetto in Liepāja was established only in June 1942, which meant that most of the Jews that were not killed in 1941 still resided in their homes until the summer of 1942.<sup>12</sup>

The depositions of Latvian SD witnesses from Liepāja have helped a great deal to fill in the information, from the Latvian perspective, about the German occupation and the killing of the Jews. The evidence from Liepāja has much to contribute to understanding and defining the relationship that existed between the German SD and the Latvian police units. The German and especially the Latvian witnesses show that the Latvian Liepāja SD detail participated heavily in the killings between October and December. Yet, there is nothing in the evidence that substantiates the spontaneity theory that the Latvians killed on their own. From the first minutes of the conquest, the sniping incidents aside, the Germans were in control of the city. For a Latvian to own a weapon was dangerous.

### *The Jews of Liepāja*<sup>13</sup>

The Liepāja district, except for the city itself, was not very heavily Jewish. The 1935 census showed 7,364 Jews. An additional 300 lived in the towns of Vaiņode, Grobiņa, and Priekule, for a total of about 7,600 people. Subtracting 25 percent, the rate of Jewish escapees from Latvia, we may suppose that 5,700 were trapped by the Germans. It is not very likely that 300<sup>14</sup> of them survived the Holocaust. As many as 5,000 of the 5,700 Jews were killed in and around Liepāja, mostly in 1941. In 1942, 800 Liepāja Jews were alive in the ghetto. In the autumn of 1943, the ghetto was closed, and all Jews were transferred to the Mežaparks (Kaiserwald) concentration camp.<sup>15</sup>

The major killing sites in Liepāja were Rainis Park in the middle of the city, the seashore south of the lighthouse, the Fishermen's Harbor, the area near the Olympia Stadium, and the “Smokehouse.” Some killings also occurred just north of the Naval Harbor, near the water tower. The site of the largest killing was Šķēde, on an erstwhile Latvian army training grounds in the dunes near the Baltic. Along with the Jews, hostages, communists, and Gypsies were killed there.

**Table 9.1 Jews Killed by Liepāja SD**

1941	Liepāja	Ventspils	Elsewhere
8/30 to 9/5	38		
9/22	61		
9/24	37	67	
9/25 to 10/2	241		
10/3 to 10/17	213 + 40 comm.		
11/3		533 + 1 comm.	386 in Aizpute
11/3 to 11/13	30 +26 comm.		326 Liepāja district
11/13 to 11/27	33 +16 comm.		
12/10	43 +35 comm.		
12/14 to 12/16	2731 +23 comm.		
1942			
1/17	14 +27 comm.		
1/16 to 1/30	+15 comm.		
1/31 to 2/17	152 +12 comm.		
2/18 to 2/25	+7 comm.		
3/1 to 3/18	9 +7 comm.		
5/16 report	38 +6 comm.		
6/2 report		173 Gypsies	
			19 Gypsies in Aizpute

Source: Landgericht Hannover: *Strafurteil gegen Grauel*, pp. 62-63.<sup>16</sup>

### The Liepāja SD—Its Leadership and Activities

The first EG Teilkommando that entered Liepāja was EK 1a, about twenty men strong and led by SS-Obersturmführer Reichert. They arrived on June 29, the same day as did the fighting forces. One of the very early EM reported that Security Police-type measures had been carried out in the district even before the fall of Liepāja.<sup>17</sup> EK 1a, or at least a part of it, ensconced themselves in the Hotel Pēterburga.

One of the first EK 1a activities was to search the NKVD building for evidence of Soviet atrocities,<sup>18</sup> preferably corpses, that could be publicly displayed.

In the course of the occupation Liepāja had six SD chiefs: Reichert, Grauel, Kügler, Jurgschait, Hildmann, and Zingler.

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**Table 9.2 German SD and Other Authorities in Liepāja**

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Alnor, Dr. Walter, Gebietskommissar of Kurzeme. Highest civilian authority in the region.

Auschrat, Heinrich, Lieutenant. Schutzpolizei in Liepāja.

Baumgartner, Hans. EK 2. Driver.

Brückner, Korvettenkapitän. Military commandant of Liepāja.

Dietrich, Dr. Emil, Highest Police chief in Liepāja.

Fahrbach, Paul. EK 2.

Friedrichson, Harry. Served in Einsatzkommando 1a, under Reichert. Baltic German.

Grauel, Erhard. Leader of the Teilkommando 2. Grauel's team: Reiche. Kuketta, Handke, Michalsky, Strott, Fahrbach, Krapp. And Ordnungspolizei men Bitzer, Huckenholz, Jungkunz, Josef Kaiser, Mrozek, Preuschoff, Trebesch and Zahn.

H (perhaps Hildmann). Hauptsturmführer. Head of SD in 1944-45

Handke, Erich. EK 2.

Jurgschait, Kurt, Obersturmführer. Head of SD in 1943-44.

Kaiser, August. SD.

Kawelmacher (aka Dr. Gontard). Naval Headquarters commandant.

Kerschner. Ghetto commandant, oversaw the Latvian guards of the ghetto.

Krapp, Filip. EK 2.

Kraus, Otto K. EK 1a. Served under Reichert.

Kügler, Wolfgang, SS Untersturmführer. Liepāja SD chief (14 July 1941 to April 1943.)

Kuketta, Gerhard. EK 2.

Lomner. First military commandant of Liepāja.

Michalsky, Jasep. EK 2.

Neumann, Max. EK 2.

Peterson.

Reiche. Supervised Women's Prison.

Reichert. Commander, Teilkommando of EK 1a. Organized the first killing in Liepāja.

Rosenstock, Georg. Commander of the 2nd Company of the 13th Battalion. Arrived in Liepāja in July and stayed there until September 10.  
 Schultz, Walter. SD. Driver and examining magistrate.  
 Schweig. SD .  
 Seiffert, SS-Hauptsturmführer. Liepāja SD.  
 Sobeck, SS-Oberscharführer. SD.  
 Stein, Korvettenkapitän. Military commandant of Liepāja.  
 Strange, Waldemar. Commander, Teilkommando of EK 1a. Baltic German. Operated in Liepāja and Priekule.  
 Strott, Karl-Emil. EK 2. Served in Liepāja from July 1941 until January 1945.  
 Zingler, Hauptsturmführer. Head of Liepāja SD in 1945.

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Source: Records of Landgericht Hannover: *Strafurteil gegen Grauel*

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The SD soon moved from Hotel Pēterburga to a building at Kūrmājas ielā 21. The Latvian SD detail at first was housed in Kūrmājas ielā 17, but in 1942 it was moved to number 21, where it occupied the first floor of the building. Kūrmājas ielā 17 at that time was taken over by the Latvian SD Political Police. The only Latvians allowed in the German quarters in Kūrmājas ielā 21 were the interpreters. The Germans had a telegraph unit and in the cellar a workshop for Jewish goldsmiths, watchmakers, radio technicians, cobblers, and tailors.<sup>19</sup>

The SD controlled, if it did not actually administer, all places of confinement in Liepāja and the vicinity: the Women's Prison (also referred to as the Interrogation Prison) at Tiesu iela 5, the City Prison for criminals at Dārzu iela, the concentration point at Dārzu iela 11, the POW camp “Dulag 101” (under Krapp and Kaiser), a transit camp for the family members of the Red Army personnel (in a school building at Alejas iela), and the Jewish ghetto at the corner of Dārzu and Kungu iela. The Liepāja concentration facility was transferred to Saldus on December 16, 1941, where the inmates were forced to work in the local cement factory.

The Women's Prison was the focal point for SD activities. All political prisoners were sent there, and in the initial months it served as a concentration facility, a transit station, for the Jews on the way to the killing grounds. Under the authority of the Liepāja SD also were the cities and districts in the western part of Kurzeme: Saldus, Kuldīga, Talsi, Aizpute, Priekule, Vaiņode, Skrunda, and others. As regards the killing of the Jews, the SD activities extended only to the Liepāja and Aizpute districts.

*Reichert*

The killings in Liepāja started as early as June 29, but the first documented massacre took place on the evening of July 3 or 4, when Grauel led his own detail of EK 2 into the city and found Reichert's team killing Jews in Rainis Park. It was a German operation with no Latvians on the site. How many Jews were killed there we do not know. The Russians had left fortification ditches, which Reichert was filling up with corpses. One of the participants, Harry Friedrichson, testified that on the one occasion in which he participated about 150 Jews were killed.<sup>20</sup> He also thought that the killing squad was a Wehrmacht unit.<sup>21</sup> Grauel testified that when he met Reichert he saw about a dozen Jews near the pits, but he did not look into the ditch and count the corpses.

Grauel's commando consisted of about thirty men; more than half of them were Ordnungspolizei, wearing green uniforms, from the 9th Battalion attached to the commando in Gumbinnen.<sup>22</sup> Reichert told Grauel that he [Reichert] was carrying out a special assignment. Grauel left and reported to the commandant of the city, who assigned living quarters to his detail. Eventually Grauel's detail was billeted in a house at Kūrmājas Prospekt 21. Reichert left the city on the day after Grauel's arrival.

*Grauel*

Unlike Reichert, Grauel in the beginning was more prone to organizational work than to killing, although once orders came and he understood the assignment, he was not shy. He took charge of the Women's Prison and appointed Reiche to supervise it. The prisoners were mostly Jews, but there were also other civilians—communists, communist-sympathizers, and men who had fought against the Nazis in Liepāja. Rumors abounded that the Jews were responsible for the communist atrocities. Grauel, assisted by Reiche, Kuketta, Handke, and Michalsky, set up a table in the prison courtyard to hear and screen the cases. Many prisoners arrived with a slip of paper specifying the cause of arrest. Those who arrived without a slip were interrogated and a brief deposition taken. The Jews were imprisoned without a hearing. This meant that Jews were imprisoned as Jews.<sup>23</sup> Werner Hartmann, a war correspondent and propagandist, went ashore July 6 and visited the jail. He saw the cells so crammed, mostly with Jews, that there was no place to lie down. The officers bringing the victims to the prison were mostly, if not exclusively, Latvian self-defense men.

The first killings that Grauel carried out in Liepāja were ordered by the city commandant, Brückner, as a follow-up to the retribution rules of July 1. On July 8 an announcement was published in *Kurzemes Vārds*, saying that as a reprisal for the shooting at the German patrols that had taken place during the previous nights, thirty Bolsheviks and Jews had been shot.<sup>24</sup>

The execution of the “hostages” took place on July 7 in the dunes, near the lighthouse south of the city. The victims were selected in the Women's Prison, taking every fifth prisoner. The killing was done by Grauel's men.<sup>25</sup>

About the time of the execution of the hostages, according to Grauel, Reichert reappeared in Liepāja with an angry message from Stahlecker. Grauel was accused of not doing what he was supposed to do. Reichert especially reproached Grauel for allowing the Jews who were shot in Rainis Park to be reburied in a cemetery.<sup>26</sup>

As a proof of his activities, Grauel showed Reichert the prisoners lists that he had compiled. Reichert checked off a number of names in the roster and said that they must be shot, and that the killing must take place that very day. Grauel asked Neuman to organize an execution for July 8. The killings began on July 8, continued on July 9 and 10, each day executing at least one hundred men.<sup>27</sup> The killings were done by German and perhaps also Latvian teams. The periphery was guarded by both Germans and Latvians, the latter identified by a red-white-red armband. The victims consisted almost exclusively of Jews, and they were brought to the site from the Women's Prison in truckloads of twenty people. After a round of killings German officers with machine guns entered the pit to examine the victims, and if any signs of life were found “insurance” shots were delivered.

Werner Hartman, using his press card, entered the killing grounds on July 8 and stayed there from 11:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. He saw about ten to fifteen SD men present and remembered a long ditch that ended in a pit. The freedom fighters, as Hartman referred to the Latvians and the SD men, drove the Jews ten at a time into the pit and aligned them in a double row. Brains and blood splattered all over. Hartman testified that he remembered that about 200 people were killed in his presence.<sup>28</sup>

After the action, Grauel requested Batz, the head of the EK 2, to relieve him from the assignment, since he was not up to the job. In a few days Kügler, with orders from Batz, arrived to replace him. Grauel's detail dispersed; some stayed in Liepāja, others left for Rīga directly, still others went with Grauel to Ventspils. In spite of his alleged revulsion over the



killings in Liepāja, Grauel organized and carried out actions in Ventspils. For some three months thereafter he worked in the Rīga SD headquarters, but by the end of October he was back in Germany studying jurisprudence.

### *Kügler*<sup>29</sup>

SS Untersturmführer Kügler arrived in Liepāja on July 10 or 11. Thereafter, the further killings in 1941 and all subsequent years were Kügler's responsibility. It was Kügler who stabilized the SD presence in Liepāja and systematized the killing procedures. Kügler organized, attended, and gave orders at all of the killings from the middle of July 1941 through April 1943,<sup>30</sup> when he was transferred and SS-Obersturmführer Kurt Jurgschait replaced him. After September 1941, the German SD detail was reduced to a team of about fifteen to twenty men. Kügler ran the SD network in the western part of Kurzeme, where he oversaw the SD in the districts of Aizpute and Talsi. He also oversaw the Women's Prison, the Latvian SD Guard Platoon, the concentration camp in Saldus, and the Liepāja ghetto.

Although organized by Kügler, the killings themselves were carried out and assisted by numerous groups, including the German SD detachment of Liepāja, the Ordnungspolizei of Liepāja, the Latvian SD Guard Platoon (Latvian SD Wachtmannschaft), parts of the Latvian Liepāja Schutzmannschaften, and the Arājs commando; from Rīga. There is also more than a strong possibility that some German Wehrmacht and naval forces participated in the killings, especially in the beginning phase and perhaps also in the December action. The co-defendants in the Grauel case, Handke, Kuketta, and Fahrbach, admitted that during 1941 there was at least one action every two weeks under Kügler.<sup>31</sup> In reality, during the months of July, August, and September there were more than two actions every week, for killings also took place in the vicinity of Liepāja—Priekule, Vaiņode and Grobiņa. The victims, as numerous witnesses testified, were selected by Kügler himself. He went through the lists and interrogation documents, and the names slated for killing he red-penciled with a big E (*Erschiessungen*)—marked to be shot.

It is also peculiar to Kügler's administration that victims often were killed in small groups, frequently fewer than ten. The killer team was brought to the site, but had nothing to do with digging the pits or burying the corpses. The basic weapon was a bolt-action rifle (the Latvian SD used Russian rifles). The killings were carried out in the Biķernieki method, as established by Stahlecker's men in Rīga. The problem of guarding the periphery was minimized by bringing the victims to the site in these small

groups. The truck carrying the victims would stop about forty meters from the pit, the people would be ordered out and to lie down on the ground. There was no question about the victims hearing and seeing what was going on. While the Jews from the first truck were killed, the new group of victims was delivered. Using this method of killing, a team of thirty or even twenty men, including the guards, could murder as many as a hundred people in less than two hours; in a day's time 400 people could be liquidated.

Alcohol was served at the killing site. The Germans brought along coffee spiked with cognac for themselves.<sup>32</sup> The Latvian participants received their schnapps in bottles.

From the available evidence it is impossible to ascertain how many killings took place in the period from July to September in Liepāja. Many of the actions during this period involved relatively small numbers, and any one witness was not likely to be present at all.

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### **Table 9.3 The 1941-42 Killing Operations in Liepāja**

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1941. July 4. Rainis Park: 200-300 Jews
July 7. 30 Hostages
July 8-10. 300 ?
July 20. 1st Arājs Action. <sup>33</sup>
End of July. "Ulleweit" Action: about 15 Jews.
September 22. Liepāja: 61 Jews.
September 24. 37 Liepāja: Jews killed
September 25. 123 Jews killed.
September 26. 80 Jews and communists arrested.
September 30. 21 Jews ?
?. Kurzeme: 15-20 insane and about 20 Jews <sup>34</sup>
October 3. Liepāja: 37 Jews
October 4. Liepāja: 18 Jews and 2 communists
October 8. Liepāja: 36 Jews
October 11. Liepāja: 67 Jews
About October. Šķēde: "Aktion Brückenwache." 200 Jews
October. ?. 25 Jews.
October. ?. 50-80 Jews
October. Liepāja: groups of communists.
October. Šķēde: "Aktion Linarts." 30 men and 3 women
November 1. Priekule; and Vaiņode: 123 Jews
Late October ?. 80 of all ages and sexes

Late October. Priekule: 20 Jews  
November 3. Aizpute: 386 Jews  
November 6. Liepāja: 2 Jews and 3 communist  
November 10. Liepāja: 30 Jews and 26 communists  
Beginning of December. Šķēde: about 100 people killed<sup>35</sup>  
December 15-17. Šķēde: 2749 Jews (men, women, and children)  
December 15. Liepāja by Military Harbor: 270 Jews.  
December. Killing of the insane.  
**1942**  
February 15. Šķēde: ? .<sup>36</sup>  
Beginning of March. Šķēde: About 20 communists.  
April. Šķēde: 15-20 men killed.<sup>37</sup>  
Late March ?. 20 Latvians.  
Summer. Šķēde: ?<sup>38</sup>

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Source: The records of the Grauel trial.<sup>39</sup>

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### *The December Massacre*

More than half of the Liepāja Jews were killed during a three-day massacre, December 15 to 17, in the dunes of Šķēde, about fifteen kilometers north of the city. It had been a Latvian army practice range, and nearby there were also some military barracks where in 1941 some German soldiers were quartered. On the killing grounds, less than a hundred meters from the ditch, was a wooden structure, variously described as a garage, a barn, and a horse barn,<sup>40</sup> which was used as a final transit station for the Jews.

The order to carry out the murder was telegraphed from Rīga to the German SD station. In the absence of Kūgler,<sup>41</sup> the recipient of the wire was Reiche, who took the telegram to the police chief of Liepāja, Dr. Dietrich. In the December 13th issue of *Kurzemes Vārds* Dietrich placed a notice: “Announcement. Jews are not allowed to leave their living quarters on Monday, December 15, and Tuesday, December 16.”

At this time Liepāja Jews were still living in the city, and gathering them up for the massacre was far from simple. The arrests began on the night of December 13 to 14, and they were carried out by the Latvian police forces. The victims were brought to the Women's Prison, where Jews of all ages were jammed into the courtyard. As reports tell us it was simply hell, for the space was not sufficient for the people assembled. The Jews were ordered to stand with their faces towards the wall, and told not to move or look around for relatives or at the watchmen. The noise was

earsplitting and the SD guards and the watchmen reacted with beatings and brutality. Some Jews were transported to the Šķēde grounds on the evening of December 14, and held in the wooden building overnight.

Lt. Pēteris Galiņš,<sup>42</sup> the commander of Latvian SD guards, ordered the Latvian SD platoon to be ready at 5:30 in the morning. On the first day perhaps no more than twenty Latvians were ordered out, enough for one killing team.<sup>43</sup>

In the morning of December 15 there was a freeze, but by noon the temperature had climbed to +5° C. On the following two days, the temperature did not get much over 0° C. It was cold enough for the killers to wear overcoats. The ground at the site was frozen, and there was frost and ice on the streets. The column was driven, as in the Rīga-Rumbula action, by the Latvian policemen under the supervision of the German SD. The Liepāja December action had much in common with Jeckeln's system, although its main feature, the *Sardinenpackung*, was not adopted.

When the Latvian unit got to Šķēde, Galiņš told them that they would have to do the killing. The site was about another kilometer from the road, towards the sea. The pit was a long, deep ditch dug in the dunes, parallel to the shore and about three meters wide and a hundred meters long. The Germans were already there. According to Bulvāns, one of the Latvian platoon, the killing was done interchangeably by a German unit, the Latvian SD Platoon, and a Latvian Schutzmannschaften team. The killing began about 8:00 A.M.

The Jews were taken from the barn as needed, in twenty-person groups. They were led to the place forty to fifty meters from the ditch and made to lie face down on the ground. Groups of ten were told to stand up and, except for children, to undress, at first to one's underwear, and, when driven near the pits, to undress completely. Bulvāns saw Strott and Krapp using a whip on those who did not go to the pit. The victims shrieked, whimpered, cried, and fell on their knees in front of the executioners to beg for their lives. They were positioned along the sea side of the ditch, facing the sea. The team of killers positioned themselves across the ditch, and two marksmen shot at the same victim. Blood occasionally spurted on the clothes of the killers. Children who could walk were treated as adults, but each baby was held by his or her mother and killed with her. The mothers were told to hold the babies above their shoulders and one of the marksmen would aim at the mother, the other at the child. For the corpses that did not fall into the ditch, there was a kicker<sup>44</sup> who rolled them in. After each volley a German SD man stepped into the ditch to inspect the bodies and to finish off any who showed life.

After killing ten sets of victims the team was relieved by another; Strott and Handke took pictures with a Minox.<sup>45</sup> Around noon, a milk can of rum appeared. The guards and the killers drank by dipping a glass into it. High Wehrmacht and navy officers visited the site.<sup>46</sup>

The clothes were piled up in heaps, and taken away by German military trucks. The action lasted until dark.<sup>47</sup>

We can assume that the killings on the second and the third day of the December action proceeded about the same way as on the first, but for that we have little evidence. The three Latvian witnesses, Bulvāns, Linarts, and Pavlovskis, who gave the fullest description of the killings, testified that they did not participate on the following days.

After the December killings, the Germans returned to Šķēde over and over again. They kept extending the ditch that was used in December, and by 1943 it was rumored that the ditch was one kilometer long.<sup>48</sup> The undressing of the prisoners also continued until the end.<sup>49</sup> In 1943, chlorine was scattered over the corpses.

### **Latvian Participants**

The Latvian Schutzmannschaften in Liepāja did not originate from the partisan units, as they did in some other parts of Latvia. It appears that in Liepāja, due to the fierceness of fighting there, as well as the leftist sympathies of many in town, the Latvians did not develop armed anti-communist units as they did in Rīga and many countryside regions. The German order to surrender weapons came even before the city was taken. Latvian self-defense units came into being after the German occupation of the city, and from the beginning they operated under German supervision. Sniping incidents aside, due to martial law and the curfew, the possibility that Latvians in Liepāja could have carried out any substantial killings on their own without the Germans knowing it, seeing it, and ordering it does not even arise. Even the mere possession of a weapon in Liepāja, as elsewhere, could earn one a sentence of death. A loudspeaker car drove through the city inviting Latvians to join the self-defense forces. In the July 1st entry of the journal of the 291st Infantry Division it is noted: “An order Ic was issued to organize self-defense, and to arm it.”<sup>50</sup> During the first days of occupation two self-defense groups were assembled; one was in Jaunliepāja, in the wire factory where the Germans had established occupation headquarters; the other was in the prefecture in the old city. The former was organized and led by Žanis Sniķeris and 1st Lieutenant Laumanis. Many workers from the wire factory joined. They were identified by a white arm band with a green swastika on the sleeve. The

unit in Vecliepāja, consisting of Latvian army officers and *Aizsargi*, wore arm bands in the national colors, red-white-red. Taking a walk through the city, Kārlis Siljakovs, who later became an SD political investigator, saw a lot of *Aizsargi* in front of the Roma Hotel.<sup>51</sup>

Initially the Liepāja self-defense groups were poorly armed, and when their members did receive arms, they were Russian bolt-action rifles.<sup>52</sup> Most members wore the Latvian Army or *Aizsargi* uniforms, but those who had neither wore civilian garb, even Boy Scout uniforms. Organization of the self-defense forces in Liepāja was much slower than in Rīga. At first, these units did not make a firm connection with the resident SD unit in Liepāja. From the evidence in the Grauel trial it appears that during the first month the Latvians were not used as killing units at all. They were, however, active in arresting people and taking them to the Women's Prison. The source for the arrest orders in Liepāja has not been established, but there is every reason to believe that it was the Wehrmacht or naval commander, not the SD. Among the early assignments that the Latvians received was guarding the prisons, but it is not clear under whose authority they operated. After the arrival of Grauel on July 4, the Women's Prison was managed by the SD, but the Latvian guards were not considered members of the SD.<sup>53</sup> The Grauel trial judges correctly noted that the self-defense units were organized militarily, and they were not the precursors of the Liepāja Schutzmannschaften battalions.<sup>54</sup>

For the judges in the Grauel case it was difficult to establish when the first Latvian killing detail saw action. As escorts of the victims and guards of the periphery, the Latvian self-defense units were noticed as early as July 8. But until the end of September there is no clear evidence that the local Germans—Reichert, Grauel, and Kügler—trusted the Latvians. In the second half of July the Arājs commando made its first blue bus visit to Liepāja, which may be an indication that a local killing team had not yet been established. Up to and through September the main killing units were the German SD and the 2nd Company of the 13th Police Battalion, wearing green uniforms. Only when the 2nd Company left Liepāja, on September 10, 1941, was a Latvian SD Platoon (*SD Wachzug*) organized.

### *The Latvian SD Wachzug*

On September 20 Kügler set up a special thirty-man Latvian *Wachzug des SD* (Latvian Guard Platoon of the SD), which became one of the main killing teams in Liepāja.<sup>55</sup> The German Ordnungspolizei unit that carried out the killings until that time apparently was transferred. Administratively, the Liepāja Latvian SD became a part of the Arājs

organization, although Arājs himself had no control over the unit.<sup>56</sup> According to witnesses, the Liepāja unit was not made up of volunteers, but simply split off from the city's self-defense forces, mostly from the wire factory unit. Before joining the unit the men had no experience in killing and were made to practice with blanks. Bulvāns tells us that in the first two executions in which he participated he did no shooting; they were told to learn the method.<sup>57</sup>

After they joined the SD platoon the men continued to wear Latvian army uniforms, but for identification were given a green arm band with a skull and crossbones on it.<sup>58</sup> Around mid-1942, when many members of the platoon were ordered to the front, the unit was dressed in German uniforms. When formed, the platoon was housed in Kūrmājas ielā 17, but later was moved to Kūrmājas iela 21, into the same building as the German SD headquarters.

As the name indicates, the Latvian SD Guard Platoon had to perform various guard duties and run errands for the Germans; they guarded the SD house and transported prisoners, most frequently from the Women's Prison to SD quarters for interrogations. The commander of the platoon during the killing period was Lt. Pēteris Galiņš. Later First Lieutenant Bogdanovs and Lieutenant Lapa, from the Rīga Arājs commando, were associated with the Liepāja SD unit. In its early days the platoon was divided into two sections, one lead by Žanis Essenbergs, the other by Jauģietis. While the platoon consisted of men from Liepāja, the members lived in their own homes. Later, when outsiders joined the unit, they resided in dormitories on Republikas iela.

The Latvian witnesses agreed that the first time they carried out a killing was at the end of September or early October in the vicinity of the lighthouse, just past the Olympia Stadium. They differed on whether they walked or were driven to the site. P. Pavlovskis remembered that in the first action about twenty of the Latvians participated.<sup>59</sup> They were ordered by Lieutenant Galiņš to assemble at their headquarters at 5:00 in the morning, and they walked or were driven to the site. Galiņš picked ten men for the killing team, positioned them across the ditch from where the victims were placed. Five victims at a time were brought out and killed. The total number killed on that occasion was twenty people, and it took them about one hour to do it.

In addition to carrying out the killings in Liepāja, on at least three occasions the Latvian platoon was sent outside the city: to Vaiņode (November 1), to Aizpute (November 3), and to Grobiņa (November ?).

*Vaiņode*

Vaiņode was a town of 1,416 inhabitants sixty kilometers southeast of Liepāja, where 125 Jews had lived in 1935. Galiņš led an SD group of twenty-five men to Vaiņode. Eight Germans accompanied them but they traveled separately in two passenger cars. Schutzmannschaft men from Vaiņode had brought the victims to the killing site outside the town, where they were quartered in an uninhabited military building. When the killing began the victims were brought out in groups of ten. About fifty meters from the building there was a barracks and behind it some woods. Between the woods and the barracks there was a ditch. Knowing that they would be killed, Jews had thrown away their valuables.<sup>60</sup> Kügler was angry at the local policemen for permitting the Jews to do that. The killing was finished at 5:00 in the evening, when the Liepāja group went to Vaiņode for a feast.

*Aizpute*

Two days after the events at Vaiņode, on November 3, the Liepāja SD Platoon was sent to Aizpute, a city northeast of Liepāja, to kill its 386 Jews.<sup>61</sup> The platoon of about twenty men started its day at 5:00 A.M. They picked up their weapons and ammunition at Kūrmājas iela 21 and piled into their beat-up Russian truck, driven by Ciesa. By 5:30 A.M. they were on the road to Aizpute.

Otto Vītols, a mechanic and truck driver who worked in Aizpute, received a message the evening of November 2 through his family that the local police wanted him to prepare a truck to transport people. When he arrived at work in the morning, two policemen were waiting for him and told him to prepare a truck for tomorrow. Since the truck was just a simple box, benches were installed and a canvas stretched over the top. The policemen told Vītols that he would have to transport Jews from Aizpute to the Kalvene railroad station. He was to drive to the police station near the market square.

When Vītols arrived at the market place at 7:00 or 8:00 in the morning of November 3rd, other LKW trucks driven in from Liepāja were ahead of him. While Vītols was chatting with the Liepāja drivers, another truck arrived carrying about twenty soldiers in green uniforms and wearing helmets. They carried weapons and spoke Latvian. An officer jumped out of the cab, entered the police station, and soon thereafter drove off again. The other drivers told Vītols that the soldiers came from Liepāja.

The Latvian SD Platoon men, in their depositions, recalled stopping only at the synagogue and proceeding about two kilometers towards



Kalvene, where they got out and walked across a meadow road, through a stand of trees, to a pit. After the Latvians departed, Vītols remembered three Mercedes arriving, full of what looked like officers with high-peaked caps. He thought there were about fifteen of them. After checking in at the police station, the Mercedes drove off in the direction of Kalvene.

The town police chief, Muzikants, came out and told the drivers to line up at the synagogue, which was only about thirty-five meters from the market place on the bank of the Tebra River. Armed policemen jumped into the cabs and took command of the drivers. Vītols was second in the lineup at the synagogue. There were policemen (*Aizsargi* types) inside and outside the synagogue. Jews—young and old; men, women, and children—carrying small bundles, filled up the trucks, about twenty persons in each. A policeman gave Vītols orders to drive to Kalvene, three kilometers from Aizpute, until a chain of policemen, some in *Aizsargi* uniforms, some in civilian clothes, blocked the road. The Mercedes were parked there, and a couple of the Germans stood on the road. A small field road branched off to the right, across a meadow into the woods. The trucks could not drive on the meadow road because a ditch full of water cut across it. The Jews, clambering out, asked the reason for stopping, and some complained that it was a long way to the Kalvene station. Vītols knew that they would be killed.

The trucks were turned around and sent back to the synagogue. All the trucks except Vītols' made three trips. On the second trip, the drivers heard shots in the woods, salvos and then singles. On the meadow some Germans were taking charge of the Jews, whose bundles were dropped there. After the second delivery, Vītols was told to drive onto the meadow to pick up the bundles. He delivered the bundles to the police precinct and went home.

The action in the woods continued until about 5:00 in the evening. It was a routine assignment, perhaps a bit bigger than most, for the Liepāja platoon. Jews were brought in groups of ten and placed in front of the execution squad. The firing team had no reserves and no replacements; every member killed about twenty people. After the action the Latvian platoon had a feast in the Aizpute police club. A sign was posted that Aizpute was *Judenfrei*.<sup>62</sup>

### *Grobiņa*

Grobiņa was a small town ten kilometers due east of Liepāja. Only about fifteen of the ninety-five Grobiņa Jews were still living when the Liepāja Latvian SD Platoon was ordered to go there. The truck carrying

the platoon went to Grobiņa churchyard road where there was a pit on the left. A ten-man execution gang killed about fifteen men and women. They finished the job in twenty minutes, and returned to Liepāja.<sup>63</sup>

### **The Liepāja Ghetto**

The ghetto was established in June 1942, about eight months after the Daugavpils and Rīga ghettos. It consisted of eleven houses on four streets; about 814 Jews, including children and old people, were housed there. Until it was abandoned in October 1943, 102 people had died; in addition fifty-four were shot in the ghetto. A barbed wire fence surrounded the ghetto, and it was guarded by Latvians in black uniforms. In May 1943 a group of thirty-five Liepāja Jews, including Aaron Vesterman, were taken to Paplaka, where they worked as craftsmen for the SS.

The daily routine in the ghetto was to wake up at 5:00 A.M., leave for work two hours later, and by 7:00 P.M. to have returned to the ghetto. Everybody from age twelve had to work at hard labor. On October 8, 1943, the ghetto was dissolved and the inhabitants sent to Rīga. The official rations were meager: 215 grams of bread a day. But according to George Schwab, the son of a well-to-do doctors' family whose father was murdered in July 1941, not many of the inmates lived on the official rations alone. Food was smuggled in daily, and the commandant, Kerschner, was bribed not to interrupt the flow. A ghetto vegetable garden was started. Crime was minimal, although in the summer of 1942 two thieves who had broken into the ghetto were caught and shot.<sup>64</sup> Schwab remembered two inmates who were caught stealing from the ghetto store.

Life in the Liepāja ghetto has been described as brutal to tolerable. George Schwab described the conditions as harsh, but, in comparison to what he had to undergo later in Mežaparks and German concentration camps, not the worst. For entertainment there was an occasional volleyball game and group singing, as well as secretly ridiculing the Nazis. A rudimentary school for the few surviving children was started. Schwab even remembered enjoying a festive meal of roast veal with potatoes. In early October the order arrived to prepare for a trip to Rīga. Gold coins and diamonds were dug up and sewn into clothing seams. Suitcases were packed and on the night of Yom Kippur, October 8, the Jews were loaded into cattle cars and shipped to Rīga.<sup>65</sup> The next day Aaron Vesterman and the Paplaka group were taken back to the ghetto to pick up winter clothes. Except for three living corpses—two shoemakers and a goldsmith—it was empty. The group returned to Paplaka, where they worked until April 29, 1944, when they returned to Liepāja and were sent on to Rīga.<sup>66</sup>

### Notes

- 1 The primary information about the killing of the Jews in Liepāja and its vicinity, and about the individuals and Police units involved in the killings was accumulated by the Hannover Landgericht in the trial of SD and Ordnungspolizei officials Grauel, Reiche, Strott, Kuketta, Farbach and Rosenstock in 1971. Our knowledge about the killing of Liepāja Jews is more complete than for any other Latvian city, save Rīga.
- 2 Latvijas PSR Zinātņu Akadēmija, *Latviešu tautas cīņa lielajā Tēvijas karā, 1941-1945*, and Latvijas KP CK Partijas vēstures institūts, *Reiz cēlās strēlnieks sarkanais: Atmiņu un dokumentu krājums par latviešu tautas bruņoto cīņu pret fašistiskajiem iebrucējiem*, vol. I, p. 9. Also see Vestermanis, *Tā rīkojās vērmahts*.
- 3 The war scene within Liepāja is well described by Siljakovs, *Mana atbilde*, Vol. 2, pp. 41-43.
- 4 The German suspicion of the locals in Liepāja never ceased. After a shooting incident, the Liepāja naval commander issued a notice to the German personnel that, considering what had happened, soldiers should keep a distance from the local population (*Mēs apsūdzam*, p. 72). Also LVVA, P-83-1-216, p. 2.
- 5 For example on October 11, 1941, Liepāja Gebietskommissar Alnors wrote to Generalkommissar Drechsler that the killing of the Jews had created a general dismay in the city. The mayor of Liepāja, he wrote, who usually agrees with anything, came to him and reported the “great dissatisfaction” in the city (*Mēs apsūdzam*, p. 155). Also LVVA, P-69-1-17, pp. 124-26.
- 6 Siljakovs, *Mana atbilde*, Vol. 2, pp. 37-38.
- 7 Ereignismeldungen, No. 12, 4 July 1941.
- 8 The role of the Wehrmacht in the atrocities in Latvia is most fully evaluated by Vestermanis, *Tā rīkojās vērmahts*, pp. 64 and 68.
- 9 *Kurzemes Vārds*, 2 July 1941. In the witness chair after the war, Stein explained that he meant the hostage rule more as a warning than a reality, because to begin with they had no hostages to kill. The same issue of the newspaper also carried an announcement of 28 June 1941, signed by Col. Karl Lotmeyer, in which Liepāja was

declared to be under siege. Thus carrying weapons was prohibited, rules of blackout were ordered to be observed, and those engaged in sabotage were to be punished by death (Vestermanis, *Tā rīkojās vērmahts*, p. 47).

- 10 *Kurzemes Vārds*, 8 July 1941; Landgericht Hannover: *Strafurteil gegen Grauel*, p. 73; also in *Mēs apsūdzam*, pp. 36-37.
- 11 The last two paragraphs specified that all objects requested must be turned in at Toma iela 19, and that the order was effective immediately. It was signed by Korvettenkapitän Brückner (*Kurzemes Vārds*, 5 July 1941). The Hannover judges in the Grauel verdict noted that it is not known whether in issuing the order Brückner represented army or SD interests.
- 12 For the story of a surviving Jew, see George David Schwab, "Destruction of a Family," in Schneider (ed.), *Muted Voices*, pp. 145-156.
- 13 There is no good modern account about the Jews of Liepāja specifically, or of Kurzeme in general. In Aizpute there was one of the earliest Jewish settlements in Latvia in the 16th century (Bobe, *The Jews in Latvia*). George Schwab, son of a well-to-do doctor of Liepāja, remembers his life in prewar Liepāja as idyllic ("The Libau I Remember," *The Latvian Jewish Courier*, No. 1, March 1985). He did, however, report having encountered some anti-Semitism in the school he attended.
- 14 We may postulate that in Liepāja more Jews were saved by the Gentiles than in any other city, because in Liepāja the Jews who were not killed lived in the city until June 1942.
- 15 The totals for the people killed in the period from 25 September 1941 to June 1942 are 4,761 Jews, 209 communists, and 193 Gypsies. In 1942 more than 800 Liepāja Jews were still alive. The terror and hardship of life under the German occupation have been most poignantly described by George David Schwab, "The Destruction of a Family," in Schneider (ed.), *Muted Voices*, pp. 145-156.
- 16 In many particulars one can question the accuracy of the trial data.
- 17 The locations of the actions were Priekule, Durbe, Asīte, and Grobiņa.
- 18 The disinterment of corpses was one of the preoccupation of the SD. As noted elsewhere it was part of the German propaganda to blame

- the Jews for the Bolshevik crimes. See Landgericht Hannover: *Strafurteil gegen Grauel*, deposition of Harry Friedrichson.
- 19 Arājs Trial Records, deposition of Vladimirs Fedorovs, p. 2457.
- 20 The estimate of the victims in Rainis Park varies from several dozen to about 300. The Extraordinary Soviet Commission, investigating the Nazi crimes with its usual exaggeration, noted that 1,430 people were killed in the park (LVVA, P-132-30-21, pp. 14-17).
- 21 Landgericht Hannover: *Strafurteil gegen Grauel*, deposition of Harry Friedrichson.
- 22 Among the Ordnungspolizei members were Bitzer, Huckenholz, Jungkunz, Josef Kaiser, Mrozek, Preuschoff, Trebesch, and Zahn. It must also be noted that apparently most of the Polizei men were greenhorns, draftees, that previously had done no police work. Landgericht Hannover: *Anklageschrift gegen Grauel und andere*, p. 32; also the deposition of Jāzeps Linarts, who saw the killings in Rainis Park, p. 28.
- 23 Landgericht Hannover: *Strafurteil gegen Grauel*, p. 72.
- 24 Ibid., p. 73.
- 25 On this occasion five persons were shot at a time.
- 26 The reburying of the Jews was a well-known story in Liepāja at the time.
- 27 The victims, ten at a time, were made to enter the pit, about four by fifteen meters, and were shot with bolt-action rifles from the edge of the embankment. In the beginning the marksmen were told to divide the aim, one at the head, the other at the heart zone. Later, the order was for both shooters to aim at the head.
- 28 Landgericht Hannover: *Strafurteil gegen Grauel*, p. 91.
- 29 According to evidence in the Grauel Trial Records, in 1943 Kügler was accused of being too free with Jewish goods and was punished with eight months in prison and a fine of 800 RM. A significant factor in Kügler's "corruption" was Mrs. Kronbergs, his translator, interpreter, and lover. Šiljakovs thinks that under her influence Kügler learned Latvian, and saved Liepāja street names from being germanized. She is also known to have on occasion warned Latvians of forthcoming searches and arrests (Šiljakovs, *Mana atbilde*, vol. 2, p. 103). That she was no one-dimensional lady was also revealed by George Schwab, who says that Mrs. Kronbergs knew his mother before the war, and during the killing period hired her as a housemaid, thus securing her an SD work-pass (Schwab,

- “The Destruction of a Family,” in Schneider (ed.), *Muted Voices*. Mrs. Kronbergs emigrated to Canada after the war.
- 30 Several German SD witnesses, who had served under Kügler, testified that he was on leave during the big killing of December, 1941. But all the Latvian witnesses affirmed his presence. For Kügler’s point of view see Landgericht Hannover: *Anklageschrift gegen Grauel und andere*, pp. 94-100. The strongest evidence for Kügler’s absence in Liepāja during the December massacre was Reiche’s testimony.
- 31 Landgericht Hannover: *Anklageschrift gegen Grauel und andere*, p. 152.
- 32 Landgericht Hannover: deposition of Jāzeps Linarts, p. 16.
- 33 The presence of Arājs’ commando is establishable in a variety of ways, including the testimony of Pavlovskis, who as a self-defense member was placed to guard the road leading to the site (Pavlovskis deposition, p. 32). The date is identified by Aleksanders Vanags, Deposition of Aleksanders Vanags, January 11 and 19, 1945, Arājs Trial Records, p. 4491. According to Vanags they stayed in Liepāja for four days, and Arājs men were also active in the arrest of Jews. Vesterman was mistaken in saying that 3,000 Jews were killed on that day (“Survival in a Libau Bunker,” Schneider (ed.) *Muted Voices*, Jewish, pp. 157-67).
- 34 Landgericht Hannover: *Strafurteil gegen Grauel*, p. 180; also Jāzeps Linarts, p. 49.
- 35 The action was started at 10:00 A.M. and finished by 2:00 P.M. In this action Jeckeln’s influence can be noted, because the victims were undressed.
- 36 So identified by Aaron Vesterman, in Schneider (ed.), *Muted Voices*, p. 162. In February, due to heavy snow, Jews were taken by sleds to Šķēde.
- 37 Landgericht Hannover: deposition of Jāzeps Linarts, p. 25.
- 38 Landgericht Hannover: deposition of Antons Bulvāns, p. 36.
- 39 Some dating of the killing operations comes from a diary of an SS man from Liepāja. That document also was cited in evidence at the Nürnberg trials. LVVA, P-83-1-21.
- 40 Horse barn is correct, since a cavalry battalion of the Latvian army was housed there.

- 41 In spite of Latvian testimony, the Hannover judge believed Kügler's version—that he was on leave in Germany.
- 42 Very little is known about Lt. Pēteris Galiņš. He was killed in Russia in the winter of 1943.
- 43 The Latvian unit was driven to the killing site in a Russian-made GAS truck by Ādolfs Ciesa. From the Kūrmāja quarters, the driver took Kūrmājas iela to Jūras iela, over the bridge, then along Raiņa and Kalpaka iela to the canal, over another bridge, and then they passed the area of Kara osta to the Šķēde shore. On the way the trucks passed one column of Jews driven to the site on foot (Landgericht Hannover: deposition of Jāzeps Linarts, p. 19).
- 44 Sergeant Jauģietis from the Latvian Platoon performed as a kicker for a while.
- 45 Landgericht Hannover: deposition of Linarts, pp. 20-21.
- 46 Landgericht Hannover: deposition of Antons Bulvāns, p. 25.
- 47 The action could not have continued after 4:30 P.M., for the sunset on that date was at 3:42 P.M..
- 48 The Soviet records show the Šķēde killing grounds to have the following sizes of ditches: 1) 50 X 4 meters; 2) 265 X 8 meters; 3) 25 X 15 meters; 4) 50 X 10 meters; 5) 70 X 5 meters; and 5) a pit of 35 square meters.
- 49 Arājs Trial Records, deposition of Vladimirs Fedorovs, p. 2461.
- 50 Landgericht Hannover: *Strafurteil gegen Grauel*, p. 53.
- 51 Siljakovs, *Mana atbilde*, vol. 2, pp. 42-44.
- 52 Landgericht Hannover: deposition of Jāzeps Linarts, p. 43. The early self-defense units in Liepāja were organized by the 291st Infantry Division. “War Diary of the 291 Division.” Landgericht Hannover: *Strafurteil gegen Grauel*, p. 54.
- 53 Arājs Trial Records, deposition of Otto Stroķis, p. 2389. He served as a prison guard for several weeks in July 1941.
- 54 Several Latvian witnesses in the Grauel case testified that the 21st Liepāja Schutzmannschaft Battalion participated in the December killings. That assertion betrays the KGB hand in preparing the depositions, because the 21st Schutzmannschaft Battalion, although it originated in Liepāja, was organized in February 1942. Some Liepāja Schutzmannschaft members may have entered the 21st

Battalion, it is not likely that many did. In the 1970s the Soviets conducted a series of war crimes trials, as part of their struggle against “nationalists,” in which the 21st Battalion was accused of participating in the Šķēde killings (KGB Trial Archives, Rīga—cases 45225, 45232, 45233, 45234 45236). For the history of the 21st Battalion see Freivalds (ed.), *Latviešu karavīrs otrā pasaules kara laikā*, vol. 2, p. 111 and the 21st Battalion files in the LCK archive at the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace.

- 55 Members of the Liepāja Latvian SD: B. Bogdanovs; Brauns (political police investigator); Buks (driver); Antons Bulvāns; Ādolfs Ciesa; Eduards Dobelis; Dravenieks; Vladimirs Fedorovs; Alfrēds Freimanis; Fricsons (head of the political police, 1941-42); Gaide; Lt. Pēteris Galiņš; Harijs Garumsons (political police); Žanis Graikste; Holcmanis; Kārlis Jansons; Jauģietis; Ēriks Klāvsons; Emma Kronbergs; Kronlogs; Krācējs; Lt. Oskars Lapa; Jāzeps Linarts; Paškēvičs; Pēteris Pavlovskis; Pencis; 1st Lt. Kārlis Pērkons; Kārlis Pucherts; Rudzītis; Maīss Samovičs; Kārlis Siljakovs (political police); Ernests Stirna; Viņģelis (political police in Priekule); Laimonis Zariņš; Ginters.
- 56 Officers from the Arājs commando, among them Vanags, arrived from Rīga to establish the platoon. Vladimir Fedorovs testified that in May 1942, Lieutenant Lapa was sent from Rīga to Liepāja with a thirty-man group. Arājs Trial Records, pp. 2453-70.
- 57 Landgericht Hannover: deposition Jāzeps Linarts, pp. 8-9; also the deposition of Pēteris Pavlovskis, p. 41.
- 58 Landgericht Hannover: deposition of Antons Bulvāns, pp. 3-5.
- 59 Landgericht Hannover: Pēteris Pavlovskis took part in the following actions:
- Beginning of October by the lighthouse
  - Second one in October
  - Vaiņode in October or beginning of November
  - Aizpute
  - Grobiņa
  - Šķēde: end of November or beginning of December
  - The big action, December 15.
  - The killing of the insane: end of 1941 or early in 1942.
  - The last action in February 1942



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- 60 Landgericht Hannover: deposition of Matīss Samovičs, 3 December 1966; also Pēteris Pavlovskis, p. 11. After the killings Matīss Samovičs walked around the ditch and found several rings, one of platinum. Then he walked into the wooden building, where Jewish goods were scattered, and picked up a fur coat and a pair of boots.
- 61 In 1935 there were about 600 Jews in Aizpute.
- 62 The main evidence for Aizpute comes from Landgericht Hannover: depositions of Jānis Vītols, Matīss Samovičs, Antons Bulvāns, and Pēteris Pavlovskis.
- 63 Landgericht Hannover: depositions of Pēteris Pavlovskis, p. 16.
- 64 Landgericht Hannover: depositions of Antons Bulvāns, p. 41.
- 65 Schwab, in Schneider (ed.), *Muted Voices*, pp. 150-51; also Schwab's brief essay, "One Day in the Libau Ghetto," *The Latvian Jewish Courier*, No. 3, September 1985.
- 66 Aaron Vesterman, in Schneider (ed.), *Muted Voices*, p. 63.